

# Forestry

## Management Intent

There are two primary management goals for the timber in the Fish Creek unit. One is to salvage and utilize the valuable timber as part of the development of the agricultural tracts. Secondly, forest stands in the publicly-owned wetland buffers, recreation corridors, and the Moraine Ridge subunit will be managed to support the primary uses designated for these areas (wetland protection; recreation; and residential, commercial, and industrial development, respectively). Timber in these areas may be available for limited cutting under guidelines listed below.

## Classification

There will be no land classified as Forest Land. Forest management activities may occur on lands classified for other purposes, subject to the guidelines listed below.

## Planned Actions

Two alternatives were considered for management of the timber resources on the agricultural lands: selling the timber prior to and separately from the agricultural rights sale; or selling the timber with the agricultural rights and encouraging the farmer to salvage the timber.

The second alternative is the selected alternative. This alternative was selected because it best meets the two objectives of utilizing both the agricultural and timber resources. Assuming that timber will be harvested and farm lands developed, the highest return from each will be realized. Unfortunately, it is not possible to obtain the maximum return from development of one of these resources without negatively affecting the other. Roads are essential for agricultural production. The economic analysis by the Division of Agriculture estimates that the potential return (present value of benefits less present value of on-farm costs) from agricultural development could be sufficient to offset the cost of road construction (present value of off-farm costs). Timber harvest also cannot take place without roads. The value (quality, volume, and price) of timber at Fish Creek is insufficient to cover costs associated with timber harvest as well as road construction. To further complicate the problem, the timber market is not strong enough to utilize the timber within a reasonable period of time following road construction (such as three to five years). Full utilization of the timber, given the present industry and market situation, would probably require a delay of ten years between road construction and sale of agricultural tracts.

Such a delay would significantly reduce the net present value to be gained from agriculture. Thus the entire project (both timber and agriculture) becomes less feasible. Looking at it another way, if the state invests \$17 million to build roads in Fish Creek, ten years of delay in agricultural development results in ten years before significant return on the investment begins. Such a delay could be justified if the loss of return from agriculture were to be offset by return from timber. That does not appear to be the case. Therefore, if roads are constructed for both logging and farm use, investment costs will be offset primarily by the values generated by agriculture. Given this fact and the significant reduction in the net present value of agricultural benefits caused by a ten year delay, such a delay is not warranted.

At least part of the timber can, however, be harvested through sales by individual farmers under the guidelines in this plan (see Forestry guideline #2 below). The Division of Forestry estimates that nearly as much timber would be salvaged by farmers as could be harvested by state and borough timber sales if harvest were restricted to a three to five year period. The state and borough would also need to identify non-cutting areas such as farmsteads and windbreaks prior to timber sales. Generally farmers prefer to lay out farmsteads and windbreaks themselves. Since it is unlikely that public officials could satisfy farmers in the location of farmsteads and windbreaks, and since the value of timber sold by farmers is expected to nearly equal public sales restricted to a three to five year period, selling the timber with the land and providing an incentive to encourage farmers to salvage the timber is the best alternative.

## Management Guidelines

### Land sales/timber value.

1. The sale prices for the agricultural interests on both state and borough-owned parcels will be determined by the comparable sales method of appraisal. This method includes in the sales price the value of any marketable, commercial timber existing on a parcel.
2. Utilization of the timber is preferable to burning it. To encourage farmers to sell the timber, the following incentive is provided: upon approval of either a timber sale contract or a timber harvest plan (as part of the farm conservation plan), an extension of the farm development schedule will be provided for in the sales contract to allow time for timber harvest and a timber sale. The extension will be for a maximum of three years from the date of the land sale contract. A farmer may choose to harvest the timber himself for subsequent sale directly to consumers; in this case a timber harvest plan and schedule will be required. The timber sale contract or the timber harvest plan and schedule must be approved by the state area forester or the borough before the extension will be granted. The timber sale contract or harvest plan must contain performance requirements acceptable to the Divisions of Land and Water Management, Forestry and Agriculture or the borough to ensure that the delay in the farm development schedule is justified. Farmers intending to harvest the timber themselves must submit their timber harvest plan prior to or as part of their farm conservation plan. Farmers intending

to sell the timber must submit their timber sale contract prior to or as part of their farm conservation plan; however, they may also qualify for the extension if a timber sale contract is secured within six months of the execution of the land sale contract.

#### Farm clearing.

3. Farm clearing plans will be included in the farm conservation or development plan and must be approved by the Divisions of Agriculture and Forestry on state land and the Borough Assembly on borough land (see guidelines under Agriculture in this chapter).

#### Disposal of slash.

4. Burning will generally be allowed only when conditions are optimum for both low-fire hazard and low smoke production (generally fall or spring). Burning must be authorized in advance by the Division of Forestry (DOF) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Burning permits are required year-round by DEC and during fire season (normally from May 1 through September 30) by DOF. During the remainder of the year authorizations may be obtained verbally from DOF.
5. Piling of slash should be done when the ground is frozen to a depth of at least 6 inches by a bulldozer equipped with a brush blade in order to minimize the soil content of piles. All slash (limbs, tops, stumps, trees, brush, roots, and logging debris) must be burned or removed from areas being cleared for agriculture to reduce fire hazard. ("Burned" does not necessarily mean total consumption of the slash pile. Enough of the slash pile must be consumed to eliminate fire hazard in the judgment of DOF.). Slash piles to be burned should be tightly stacked. The length of any one slash pile cannot exceed 600 feet, nor 75 feet in width. No slash pile shall be placed within 100 feet of another slash pile with the exception that a 25 foot break in the slash piles between 600 foot alignments is permissible. A 50 foot mineral soil firebreak shall be constructed and maintained around the area containing slash piles that are to be burned. If the burning is to be done during fire season (normally May 1 through September 30), three hundred foot firebreaks around the periphery of the area are required.
6. The Division of Forestry will have personnel in the field during piling of slash, if funding is available.
7. Slash piles closer than 300 feet to the periphery of the area may not be burned during the fire season (normally May 1 through September 30) unless the following conditions are met:
  - a) Authorization must be obtained daily from the Anchorage/Matanuska-Susitna Area Forester (or his agent) after 11:00 a.m. and before ignition commences.
  - b) The level of manpower and equipment specified by the Area Forester (or his agent) must be maintained during the burning operation between the times specified by the Area Forester (or his agent).

- c) Perimeter slash piles must be burned in such a way that a 300 foot firebreak is burned out before the interior slash piles are burned in any area during the fire season (normally May 1 to September 30).
8. The burning requirements listed in this section may be amended by a Burning Permit issued by the Division of Forestry.

Woodlot management.

9. Farmers may designate a portion of their parcels as woodlots in the farm conservation plan (see guidelines under Agriculture in this chapter). Upon request, the Division of Forestry will assist the farmer in selecting the optimum location and size and in developing a management plan for the woodlot. Conservation measures for wildlife and water quality will be included in the plan.

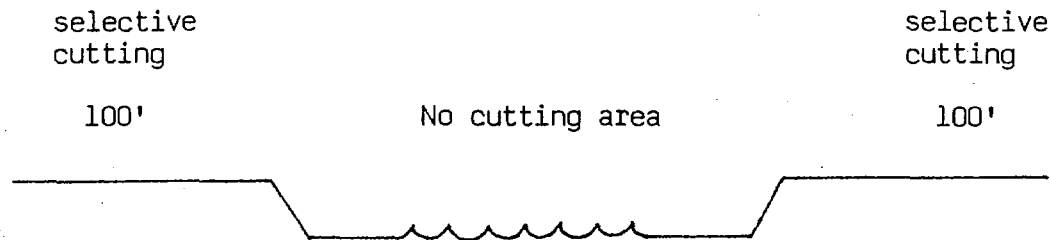
Salvage timber sales.

10. On request, the Division of Forestry will advise farmers wishing to sell their timber. In addition, they will seek funding to provide assistance with timber sales including appraisal, sale layout, sale procedures, contract development, and timber sale administration.
11. The DNR offices in Wasilla and Big Lake, the Southcentral District Office of the Division of Land and Water Management in Anchorage, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough will provide members of the public wishing to obtain firewood with information on how to contact the farmers who have firewood available. Farmers should be made aware of this at time of purchase.
12. Every attempt will be made to salvage valuable timber to be cleared from road rights-of-way. Following receipt of funding for road construction, state and borough foresters will evaluate the options for making the wood available to the commercial market and for personal use. The Division of Forestry and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough will conduct all timber sales within rights-of-way on their respective lands. If commercial volumes are not present, cutting for personal use will be allowed in order to utilize the trees and slash created in the clearing operation.

Restricted cutting areas.

13. Trails: timber harvest in the corridors for the Iditarod Trail and the Yohn Lake to Susitna and Nancy Lake Loop trails will be allowed only if such harvest protects or enhances the use or visual, sound, and other characteristics of the trail. Division of Parks must be consulted in making this decision on state lands.
14. Goose Bay/Chuitna River and Point MacKenzie/Willow transportation corridors: within each of these corridors (400 feet total width) only selective cutting of trees 12 inches d.b.h. or greater will be allowed except for the actual roadway and utility areas which will be totally cleared. Initial road clearing within these corridors is expected to be approximately 100 feet total width.

15. Wetland buffers:. only selective cutting will generally be allowed within 100 feet of Class I and II wetlands. This guideline may be changed for specific locations by the Division of Land and Water Management or the Matanuska-Susitna Borough following consultation with the Division of Forestry and the Department of Fish and Game.
16. Commercial timber harvest may be allowed in the buffer along Fish Creek and its tributaries and along other creeks if it is consistent with the purpose of the buffer and adequate justification exists. The Department of Fish and Game, the Division of Parks, and the Division of Forestry must approve of the harvest if on state lands and jointly establish stipulations. The streams in this area are often bordered by stream banks deeply cut into the otherwise relatively flat landscape. These flat areas immediately adjacent to the top side of the steep stream banks are very important habitat for wildlife. They are also important in the prevention of erosion of the canyon wall. Therefore, only selective cutting will be allowed in a 100-foot-wide strip back from the top of the stream banks. (Where the land at the top of the stream banks is to be included in an agricultural tract, the buffer will be 50 feet wide.) See illustration for restricted cutting along stream buffers.



17. Isolated "islands" within wetland areas: selective cutting for personal use only will be allowed; refer to pages 61-63 for further guidelines.
18. Moraine ridge: timber harvest in Moraine Ridge subunit will be limited to selective cutting for commercial or personal use where it is compatible with proposed or existing development.
19. Windbreaks: see Guideline 1, Agriculture, page 51.
20. Public Recreation sites: timber cutting in public recreation sites will be limited to dead and down trees.

#### Reevaluation of timber sale potential.

21. If the sale of agricultural rights has not occurred and is not scheduled within 5 years of the adoption of this plan, the feasibility of a timber sale prior to sale of agricultural rights may be reconsidered. Factors that could change the feasibility are increased demand and production capability of local loggers. If for any reason there is a lagtime of over a year between construction of initial access into the area and the sale of agricultural tracts, the Division of Forestry and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough should consider short term, small scale timber sales using selective harvest techniques. Clearcutting is prohibited unless all non-cutting areas, including windbreaks and farmsteads, are pre-identified.